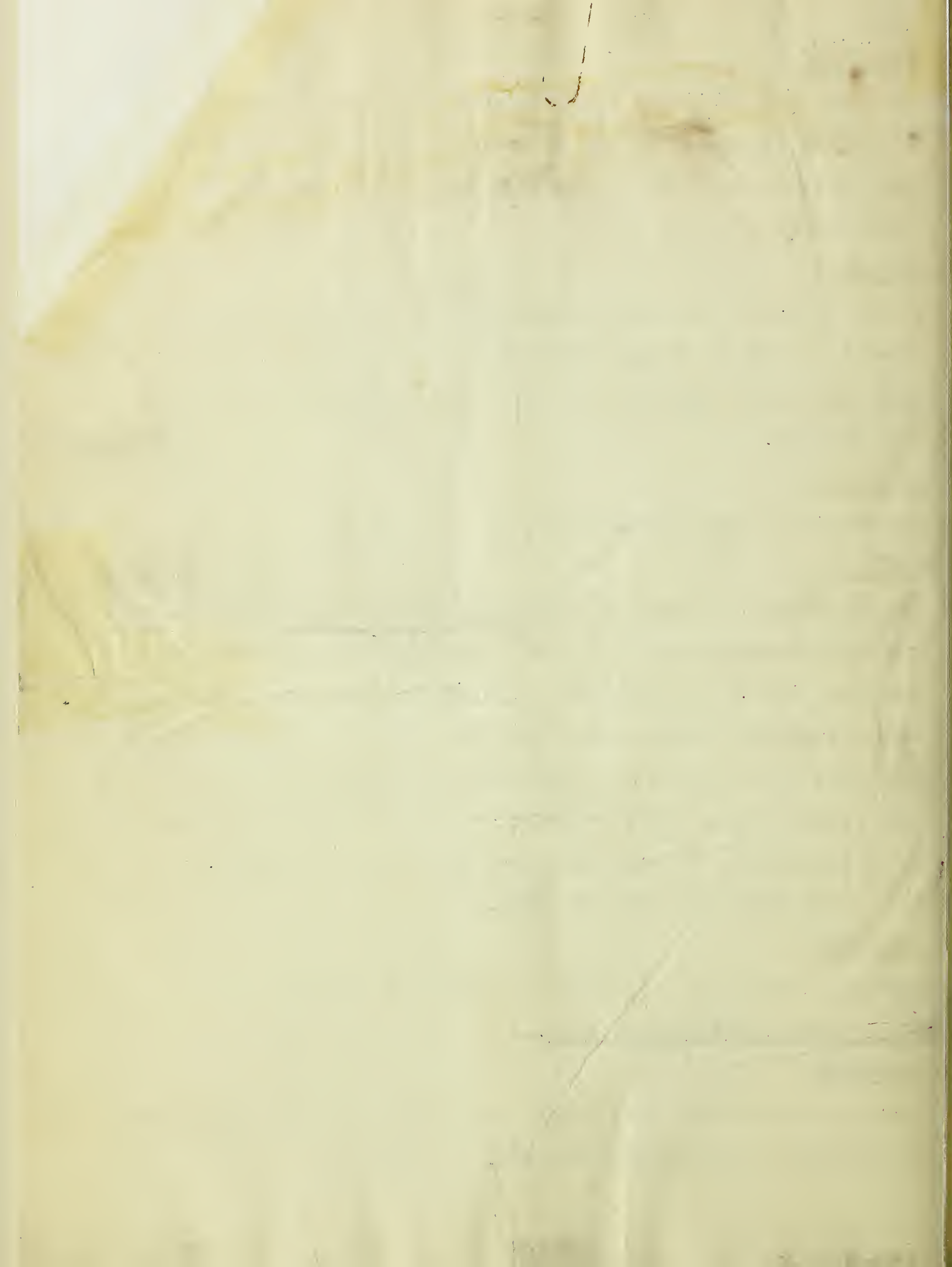


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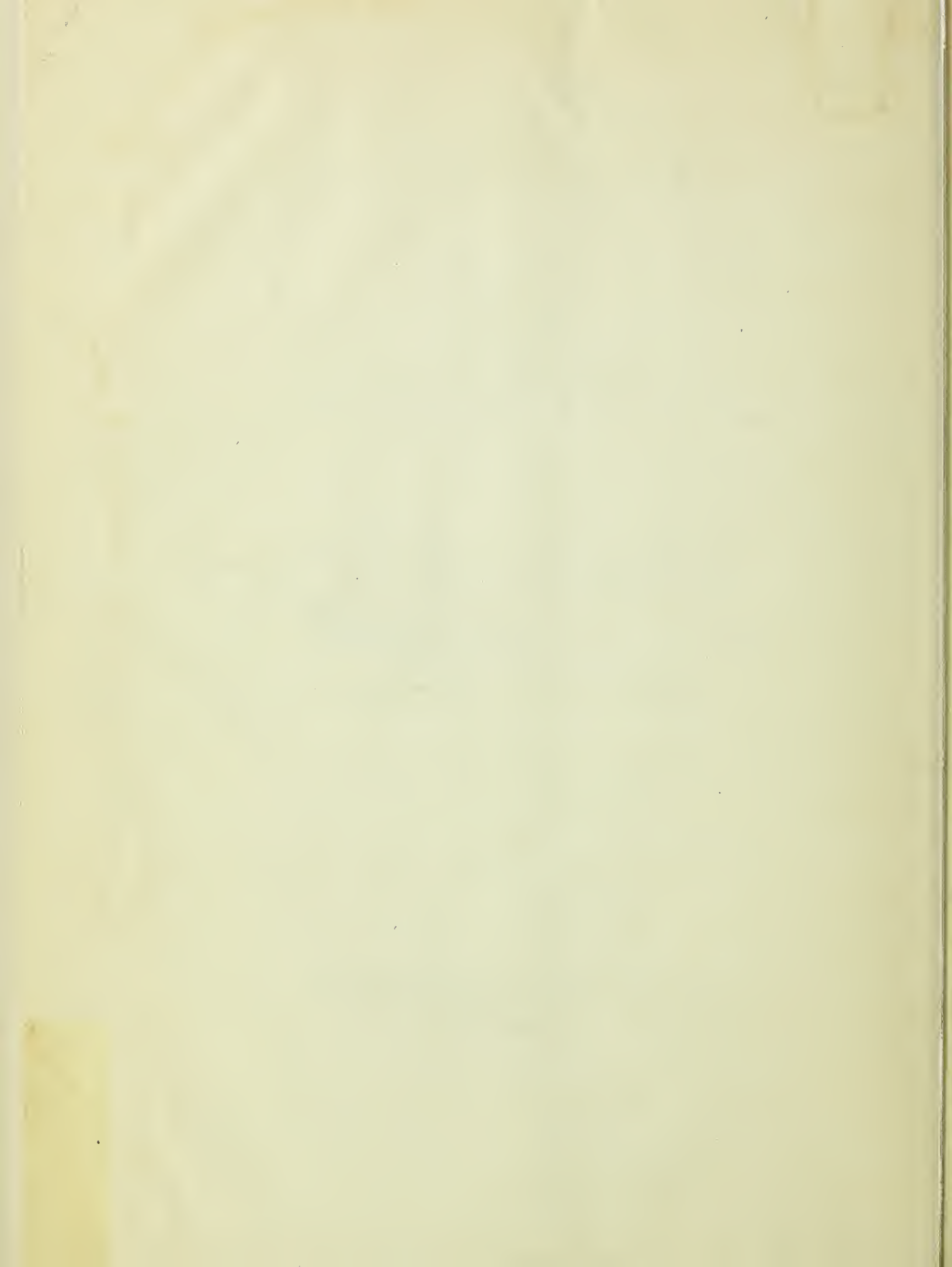
"ARKANSAS ORGANIZES"

Broadcast No. 37 in a series
of discussions of soil con-
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

January 7, 1939 6:00-6:15 p.m.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Between the L'Anguille and the St. Francis Rivers extends a high promontory--Crowley's Ridge--one of those freaks of nature, soil deposits, laid down by wind throughout the ages. Rising in Southern Missouri, it bends through Arkansas in crescent fashion until it disappears at the Mississippi near the historic old city of Helena. Famed and beloved to Eastern Arkansas farmers is Crowley's Ridge, named for a pioneer soldier of the War of 1812. This story begins in 1803, when Thomas Jefferson and Napoleon Bonaparte signed a document that went down in history. While the hardy settlers doubted the glad tidings and shook their grizzled heads, hopeful bearers of the information insisted on its accuracy...

SOUND: Excited conversation of four or five men, fading as...

MESSENGER (excitedly)

Yes, sir, it's true! The government's bought this whole Arkansas country, lock, stock, and barrel. I heard it straight last night from Pierre what's-his-name, that trader feller. He was told by some boatsmen up from New Orleans.

SOUND: Conversation of crowd grows louder.

MESSENGER

D'ya know what that means? We're on American soil! People will soon be pouring in here!

SOUND: Much conversation, and cheers.

ORGAN: DOWN IN ARKANSAS.



ANNOUNCER

Among those who came into the Louisiana Purchase was Benjamin Crowley, a soldier of the old school. He came into this much heralded el dorado with his large family, his slaves and servants. Here he tilled the fertile soil, here he hunted bear with his good friend, Mose Robinson...

SOUND: Axe chopping tree, stopping as...

ROBINSON (fading in)

Ah, friend Crowley, it looks as though your cabin will soon be finished. Perhaps I shouldn't have stopped you.

CROWLEY

I'm glad indeed that you did, Mose. (Chuckling) Now I have a good excuse for turning the work over to the others.

ROBINSON

But they haven't the brawn that you have, although young Samuel there is a husky lad at that.

SAMUEL

Yes, Mr. Robinson, some day I'll go off to the wars like father.

CROWLEY

Indeed you will not! You'll stay here and build up this land. I'm looking for you to carry on when I'm gone.

ROBINSON

I don't guess you'll be leaving this earth until all of the bear are gone, Benjamin. For the life of me, I've never known a man who liked to hunt as you do...

CROWLEY

...unless it's you, Mose. Do you remember the other day when you killed that bear with a blow of your fist?



ROBINSON

Remember it? How could I forget it?

SAMUEL

And it's a good thing you did, too, with your last rifle shot gone.

ROBINSON

Oh, well, 'twas nothing at that. Fetch me that tin, Samuel, and I'll have a drink from the spring.

SAMUEL

Here's one right here.

ROBINSON

That's a good boy.

SOUND: Cup dipped into spring, man drinks.

ROBINSON

You know, Benjamin, I've often wondered just why you settled here on this ridge where you did. Of course, me, I'm just a wanderer...

CROWLEY

Well, it's a long story, Mose. You see, I was given a grant of land for my services in the war, so I left Kentucky and headed westward.

SAMUEL

And when we got there, we found that the earthquake of '11 had sunk the land which we were supposed to get!

CROWLEY

And so, we kept moving westward until we came to this ridge. It is unusual, you must admit, heavily wooded, long...

ROBINSON

Indeed it is that.

CROWLEY

So I followed the ridge, hunting, of course...



ROBINSON (with mock surprise)

No?

CROWLEY (laughing)

Yes! And finally I settled with my brood on the west slope of this ridge, near this large spring, and now I'm building my cabin, developing the section. And it's nice in the evening, to stand here on the brow of the ridge and watch the evening sun set, far away across the country among the cypress.

ROBINSON (pensively)

Yes, it's a beautiful sight indeed. And the land! Fertile and rich!

SAMUEL

It's much better than that over in the hills. You should hear the story that Uncle John tells.

ROBINSON

And what is that, Samuel?

SAMUEL

He says that, over in the hill country, it takes two men to plant corn.

ROBINSON

Two?

SAMUEL

Yes. One to pry the rocks apart with a crowbar, while the other fires the seed down the crack! (All laugh)

ORGAN: DOWN IN ARKANSAS.



ANNOUNCER

But Eastern Arkansas was a fruitful country. The hills were healthful. The lands bore abundantly. And as the news traveled back to Kentucky that Benjamin Crowley had found a delightful ridge, more and more settlers poured into the newly-purchased territory, headed for fertile "Ben Crowley's Ridge." Cotton became the chief cash crop, cotton, cotton, always more cotton. And as the sugary silt loams melted away with each rain--and Eastern Arkansas gets nearly 50 inches of rainfall each year--soil erosion became more prevalent. Many cotton growers shifted to fruit growing--but soil losses continued.

ORGAN: DOWN IN ARKANSAS (slowly).

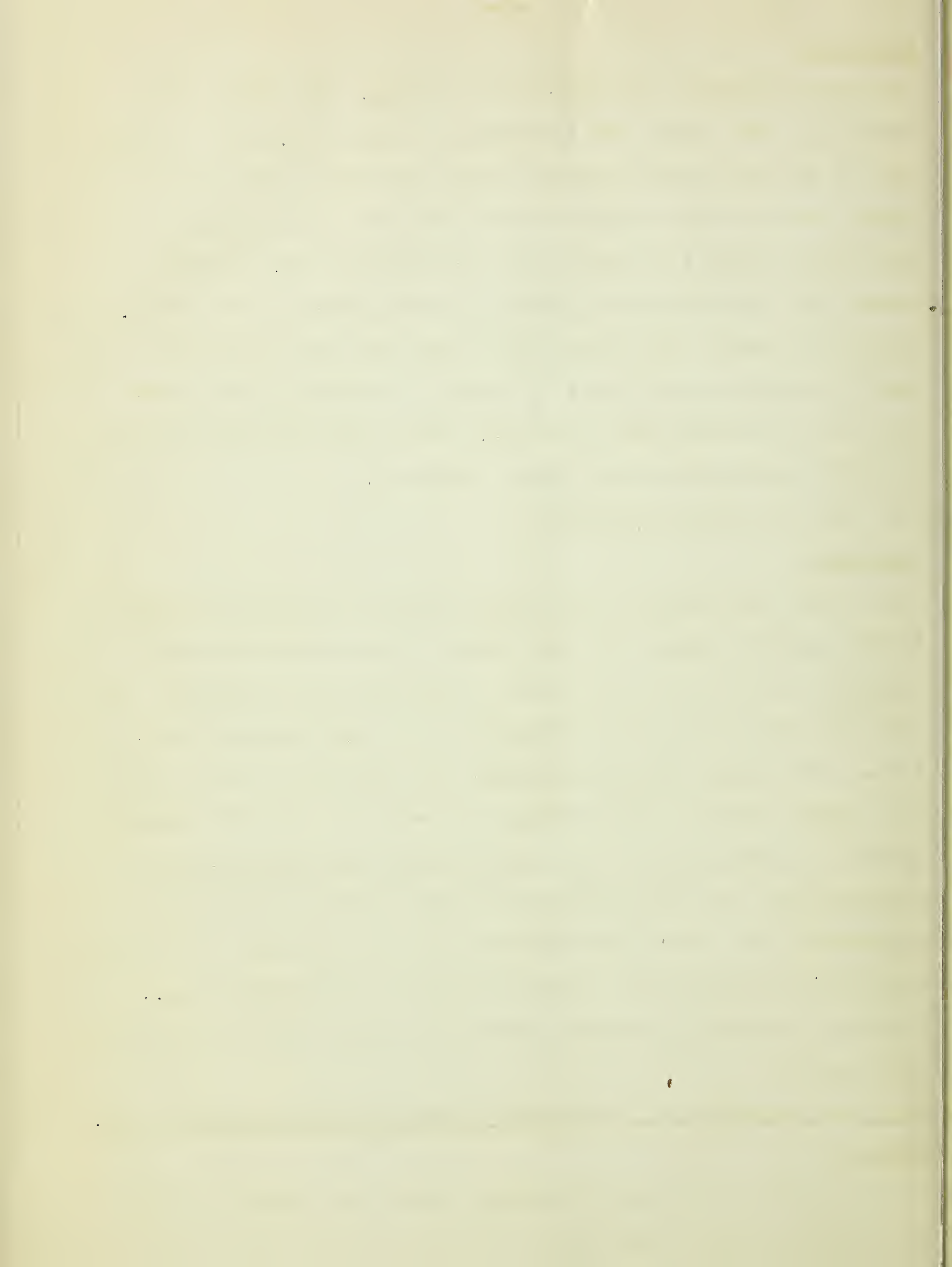
ANNOUNCER

Even before 1937, great, deep gullies had cut their way across fields, pasture lands, and even roads. Lying along Crowley's Ridge were the ruins of more than a dozen deserted villages. And even the site of the old Crowley home was a gully-washed hillside. But lately, determined, aggressive Arkansas farmers have been taking steps to end needless soil wastage. In 1937 Arkansas became the first state in the union to pass a soil conservation district law. One day shortly after the law was passed, the courtroom in the Greene County courthouse at Paragould was packed with men who represented a cross-section of community life.... bankers, merchants, garagemen, school teachers, and newspapermen... and farmers.

SOUND: General bustle of conversation throughout following sequence.

STEDMAN

Everett, you've had a lot of success about this erosion control proposition. What's your idea?



ROGERS

Well, Stedman, I've done a little, I guess. Not much. But I do know that all of this sheet erosion and those darn gullies are unnecessary.

FARLEY

We got erosion, all right, plenty of it. I've known that for a long time, but we haven't known how to stop it.

ROGERS

Farley, that trip down to Forrest City was an eye-opener, wasn't it?

FARLEY

It sure was. These soil conservation demonstrations set up by the government ought to show us, in a practical way, how we can save our soil. It's high time some of us outside these demonstrations were getting started in the same way.

STEDMAN

He's right, Everett. Reckon there's none of us smart enough to lick this thing single-handed....

ROGERS

But if we set up one of these soil conservation districts, we can stop erosion all right 'cause we'll all be working together.

FARLEY

That's what County Agent Stevens was saying, and that's the reason he wants to see us get this district started.

STEDMAN

There's a bunch of other communities that are thinking the same way we are. Over around the Lower East Saline, Mine Creek, Magazine Creek.....I don't know where else.



ROGERS

I've seen enough of this work to want more of it. You know, my dad has a cooperative agreement with the CCC camp at Jonesboro, and we ought to take a tip from the work they're doing. You see, with a district organized, we can ask for help from the Soil Conservation Service or any other federal or state organizations that might be able to help us out.

FARLEY

Well, we used to make good money farming my land--good money, but each year it's getting harder and harder to make a living on it.

ROGERS

And I'll tell you why, Farley. Here's some figures the county agent gave me the other day.

STEDMAN

Yes, let's see them.

ROGERS

Here they are. Approximately 3 million acres in Eastern Arkansas are badly in need of soil conservation measures. Severe erosion is prevalent over 95 percent of the area, and more than 8 percent has been destroyed by erosion.

FARLEY

That's all right. Most of us are willing to do whatever we can to save our farms. All we want is for someone to show us how.

ROGERS

That's how I feel. We've worked our land, and kept on working it, and suddenly we've waked up and found it's about all gone. Now, I'm a businessman as well as a farmer, remember, and I know darned well that the prosperity of the town depends on the prosperity of the farmers.

STEDMAN

Here's another point about these districts. I've been trying to control the rainwater that flows over my land, but I'm getting a lot of soil and water from farms up the creek where there ain't no conservation work. Seems to me if we get this work on all farms in a watershed, we can protect all our land.

ROGERS

Now, look at this bulletin on soil conservation districts. If you'll read it over, you'll find out just how these districts work.

FARLEY

Yes, I glanced through it the other day. The thing to do, is to get the district formed, then pick out some level-headed farmers in this watershed and elect them to the board of supervisors. Then we can get a conservation program started.

STEDMAN

Can't get started soon enough for me.

SOUND: Rapping of gavel, and conversation rises, then subsides.

CHAIRMAN

Order! Order, please! The meeting is opened. We're here to find out how the farmers feel about the organization of a soil conservation district here in Greene County. Mr. Rogers, did you have something to say?

ROGERS

Before the hearing starts, let me tell you about something I saw the other evening. Maybe you think I'm getting sentimental, but the other day I drove by a hill farm at sunset. A plowman following a tired mule was plodding up the hill. Below him, almost blotted out by heavy shadows, was a field riddled with gullies. That man looked tired, beaten. Men, that mustn't happen to us. We must work together.



ORGAN: TOGETHER.

ANNOUNCER

Following that meeting at Paragould, Greene County farmers voted on the question: shall we establish a soil conservation district? The vote was 816 in favor, 6 against. (Slight pause. Then change to a somewhat more rhetorical tone.) A large monument stands out in a cemetery in Greene County. Upon a smooth slab near the base of that monument is the inscription, "Benjamin Crowley. 1758-1842. The man for whom Crowley's Ridge is named." Patriotic citizens of Arkansas built that monument. And today, thousands and thousands of Arkansas farmers are building another kind of monument--not of stone and mortar, but of soil, soil to feed and clothe and shelter the Arkansas of tomorrow.

ORGAN: TOGETHER.

ANNOUNCER

And now, once again we turn to the Dayton, Ohio, regional office of the Soil Conservation Service, and to Ewing Jones.

JONES

Thank you, _____. Before we go any further, I'd like to make one hasty amendment to this story...

ANNOUNCER

...and that is...

JONES

...that although the Greene County district was the first in the state to be formed, it is really one of those "e pluribus unum" propositions, one among many. Three more were organized at about the same time, and as we go to press 13 Arkansas districts have been voted in.

ANNOUNCER

You say "as we go to press" as though others are on their way.



JONES

Yes, hearings are being held all over the state. At the present time, _____, and I wish you'd get this figure: at the present time, approximately five million acres are included in districts already formed--in the one state of Arkansas. And in balloting for the first ten districts, more than 10,000 farmers voted for them, with only 250 against.

ANNOUNCER

By the way, Ewing, just who is responsible for the progress that's been made in organizing these Arkansas districts?

JONES

Well, _____, much of the credit must go to the progressive farmers in each of these communities. In the case of Greene County--I hate to single out a few, because dozens of people played a highly important part--but men like Everett Rogers, Donald Cox, Ray Meriweather, L. V. Stedman, and J. H. Farley are certainly due for a lot of credit. And, of course, County Agent John Stevens.

ANNOUNCER

And other states are following the progress Arkansas is making?

JONES

I wouldn't exactly say "following," because practically every state in the union recognizes its erosion problems, and is doing something about it. Twenty-six states have now passed laws that permit farmers to form these soil conservation districts. And I don't need to assume the role of a prophet to predict that more states will do the same thing in 1939, and this is 1939, I believe.



ANNOUNCER

It's been that for a full week, now. But now, even though I know in general how these districts operate, I wonder if you'd mind being a little more specific. Suppose I were a farmer, and wanted to have a district in my own county, or watershed, or whatever boundary might seem logical.

JONES

Why, _____, I'm surprised. If you'd read that bulletin, "Soil Conservation Districts," like Mr. Rogers did, you'd know all about it.

ANNOUNCER

But I don't have a copy of the bulletin.

JONES

Mr. _____, Ladies and Gentlemen: Copies of the bulletin, "Soil Conservation Districts," may be secured by writing to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio.

ANNOUNCER

I'm properly chastised, and I'll write for the bulletin tonight. But going on with the order of business, Ewing, I wish you would point out the highlights of these districts laws.

JONES

I'll do that briefly. Of course, the laws vary a little from state to state--and remember that 26 states now have these laws. Anyway, the general procedure is something like this: Farmers in a community decide they need a district. They sign a petition to the state soil conservation committee. If, say, 25 landowners or tenants in the area sign the petition, the state committee holds a hearing to determine whether a district is needed.



ANNOUNCER

Like that hearing in the Greene County courthouse?

JONES

Exactly. If the committee finds out that a district is needed, a referendum is held, and if a majority votes yes, the district is formed. Three supervisors are chosen by local ballot, two more are appointed by the state committee, and the district gets under way. It becomes a legal subdivision of the state, and as such it's empowered to ask, and receive, state and federal assistance. Then the board of supervisors develops a program of work, and soil conservation operations begin on the farms in that community. As I said, that's only the general idea. The details may vary from state to state. But the important point is that it's a community proposition--a cooperative proposition.

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

SOUND: Cow milking scene.

FIRST FARMER

You're getting a good milk yield this year, Bill.

SECOND FARMER

Sure I am. Good cows, good pastures.

FIRST FARMER

And your pastures used to be a bunch of gullies.

SECOND FARMER

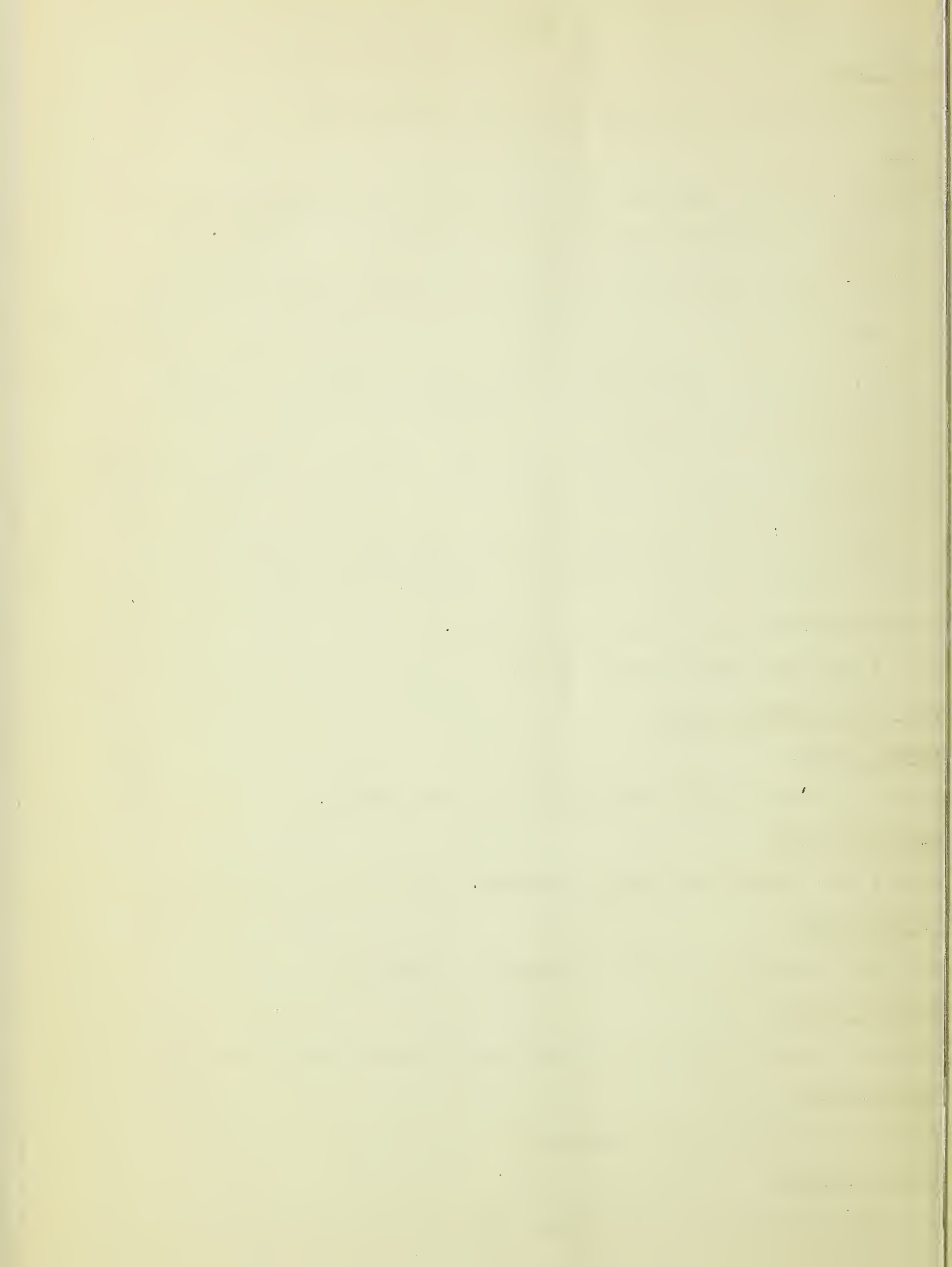
That was before we organized that soil conservation district.

FIRST FARMER

I wish we had one in our community.

SECOND FARMER

Why don't you find out more about soil conservation districts?



FIRST FARMER

How can I?

SECOND FARMER

Here comes _____ . He'll tell you.
(announcer)

ANNOUNCER

Copies of the bulletin, "Soil Conservation Districts for Erosion Control," may be secured by sending a letter or a penny postcard to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. Next week, Bermuda Grass.

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away is a studio presentation of the agriculture department of the Nation's Station.

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